The Black Cat

APR 18 1906

MAY 1906

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In the Court of God.
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Handwriting in the Air.
Lieut. F. V. S. Chamberlain.

The Edge of Life.
Winona Wilcox Payne.

The Lady in the Green Veil.
Don Mark Lemon.

A Man, a Woman, and a Baby.
C. F. Martin.

Vol. XI., No. 8. Whole No. 128. Copyright, 1906, by The Shortstory Publishing Company.

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The Black Cat

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APR 18 1906
Copyright Entry
CLASS XXc. No.
COPY B.

Vol. XI., No. 8.
Whole No., 128.

MAY, 1906.

5 cents a copy.
50 cents a year.

Entered at the Post-Office at Boston, Mass., as second-class matter.

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In the Court of God.*

BY EDWIN CARLILE LITSEY.

ROTHER ANGELO, arise!"

The chapter room was as still as the eternally silent cloisters of the monastery, as the voice of the Abbot came, cold and ringing with inexorable justice, from the middle of the daïs where he sat with the Prior and Sub-Prior flanking him on either side. It was the hour for *mea culpa;* for the public confession of faults and shortcomings; of sins imagined or sins committed. One after another the monks had stood up, fully half of the assembled brotherhood, and meekly made known the weaknesses of which they had been guilty. Penance had been meted out to each, large or small, according to the magnitude of the offense. During this ceremony the eyes of the Abbot had dwelt almost constantly upon the bowed head of a young brother, late a postulant, but now a member of the order, and under vows. Expectancy was in the Abbot's eyes, and a look of confidence. But when the last monk had accused himself and sat down, the young brother still remained passive, with his head bowed over his crossed hands. The Abbot's face grew stern. Anger glowed in his

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The writer of this story received a cash prize of $500 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending October 12, 1904.

deep-set eyes, and his voice was vibrant with restrained indignation as he uttered the command —

"Brother Angelo, arise!"

The man — he was scarcely more than a lad — looked up quickly as he caught the familiar tones of authority. A deep flush spread over his face, and with a half-scared glance around at the immovable forms of his silent brethren, he arose and walked across the bare plank floor to a point directly in front of the Superior. Here he took up his place, with his hands crossed in the loose sleeves of his cassock, and his tonsured head bent low. He had not spoken a word.

"Brother Angelo, this is the hour for *mea culpa!*"

There came no answer.

"Brother Angelo, I repeat that this is the hour for *mea culpa!*"

"I know it, Father Abbot."

The young man raised his head and shot one glance at the speaker, then let his chin drop again.

"Then confess!" resumed the merciless voice. "Confess, that I may perchance grant absolution and impose penance!"

"I have nothing to confess, Father Abbot."

The white-cowled figure on the daïs stretched out its hand, and pointed with one long forefinger at a cord about the neck of the culprit, half hidden by the folds of his gown.

"What have you at the end of that cord, Brother Angelo?"

The young monk trembled violently at the question, and clasped both hands to his breast, while his face turned white as chalk. But he did not reply.

"Answer me, Brother Angelo. By your vow of obedience, I command you!"

"It — it — is a carving in wood."

The words forced themselves reluctantly from between drawn lips.

"What does the carving represent?"

"A — a—" but the last word would not come.

"Take off your cassock, Brother Angelo, that the brotherhood may witness your sin and shame!"

Obedient to the voice which had always compelled immediate acquiescence, the monk loosened his long garment at the throat,

drew his arms from its sleeves and let it fall in a heap at his feet, leaving his well-made body bare from the waist up. His legs were clad in coarse, light stuff, for the season was mid-summer, but his feet were bare. Depending from the cord about his neck, and resting upon his bare breast, was a medallion-shaped piece of wood, perhaps four inches across. The carving upon its outer surface was not a cross, nor yet the Christ, nor yet the Mother of Divinity. But with exquisite art there was wrought a woman's — a world woman's — face and neck and part of a naked bosom. A profusion of rippling hair fell from the brow, and this had been done with intricate skill and pains. The face was upheld and laughing — the throat and breast were wonderful in their faultless proportions and perfect lines. This was the picture laid bare in the chapter room of the monastery one morning in July, in the hour for *mea culpa,* and it rested above the heart of a young monk.

Prepared as he was for the crude representation of a woman's face — the brother who had informed on Angelo had only caught a glimpse of the thing — the Abbot was fairly dazed when he beheld the perfect beauty of the carving. He shrank back in his chair, as from some contamination, and his pale face flushed ruddily. Suddenly he sat upright.

"Hide it!" he commanded, with an imperative gesture. "It is devilish — human!"

Meekly and silently the culprit lifted his cowled habit from the floor, and put it on.

The Abbot arose, spoke a word to the Prior, then descended to the floor of the room, beckoned the offender who had stood condemned before his presence, and together, noiseless as shadows, they passed out. A few moments later, in the Superior's private room, the judge and the criminal faced each other again. The older man was strong-featured, and naturally his face was more pleasant than stern. It was softer now than it had been before the brotherhood, and his voice was touched with compassion as he spoke again:

"My son, what have you done?"

"I have sinned, Father Abbot," was the prompt reply.

"Where got you that — that ——" he could not finish the question, but pointed instead at the breast of the man before him.

"It came here with me five years ago. It was one part of my life that I could not renounce. The knowledge that I have ever lied to you in deed has always been a thorn in my heart, but this — my spirit has never been strong enough to give it up."

He touched his cassock over the spot where the medallion lay.

The Abbot sat musing, introspectively, his delicate fingers absently caressing his ivory crucifix.

"My son," he began again, in low, soft tones, "your sin is fearful, heinous. Such acts threaten the very foundations of our holy order. I had thought to let your brethren view this" — again he halted — "carving — as part penance for your crime, but when my eyes beheld it I was afraid. A man is but a man, though sheltered for a life-time in the walls of an abbey, and bulwarked hourly by prayer and meditation on things not of this life. How came you by it? How came you to cling to it when you cast from you the world and its vanities?"

Brother Angelo held up both his hands.

"Thus came I by it, Father Abbot. With these very hands I wrought it out, day by day, day by day ——"

"You! With your hands!"

"After many weeks of patient toil it was done. She from whose image it was made smiled joyfully when I showed it to her. Later, Father Abbot, the serpent tooth of faithlessness stung me, and I came to your door, and you opened, and took me in. But I could not cast this work of mine from me. I have tried and tried to give it up, but, Father Abbot, I have loved a woman and have known her love for a season, and it was sweeter than honey. I have sinned, and my sin has found me out. Forgive me! Punish me according to my merit, and take the last tie which binds me to the world I have left!"

With a swift movement he drew the cord from around his neck and cast the medallion at the feet of his Superior. Then he fell upon his knees and bowed his head to receive his sentence.

It did not come at once. The medallion had fallen reverse side up, and the Abbot slowly turned it over with his foot. The laughing face of a girl in the full bloom of youthful beauty looked up at him from the floor. The sombre eyes gazed at it from under their cowl for several minutes, retrospection struggled for a time

on the ascetic, high-caste features, then the sole of the Abbot's sandal smothered out that seductive countenance.

"*Absolvo te!*" he murmured, gently, making the sign of the cross over the head bowed at his knee. Then he sat for many minutes, silently thinking.

"My son," he resumed at last, "your penance must be severe, because your offense surpasses in magnitude any that has ever come before my notice. Are you prepared to accept the obligations I am about to lay upon you?"

"Speak, Father Abbot, and do not temper your justice with mercy."

"Then arise, go to the tool-house, and fetch hither a hatchet."

Brother Angelo dumbly obeyed, and presently stood again before the Superior.

"Take it and chop it into bits — tiny bits" — the speaker pushed the round piece of wood along the floor with his foot.

The younger man sank upon one knee, took the treasure which he had hugged to his heart for so many years, and hacked and hewed until it was a mass of splintered shreds.

"Now burn it — here. The mark it will leave upon the floor will be a constant reminder to me of the triumph of one soul over the grossness of earth."

A match was applied, and the tinder was quickly consumed. Brother Angelo's face was set like a mask, but his eyes glowed with the fervor of victorious righteousness.

"This is the beginning of your expiation, and you have performed it well. For the rest of the day let your duties be as they have been. In the morning, after chapel services, you will find in the store-room over the refectory a block of cedar. Carve me from that piece of wood the face of the Master. Thus shall your soul be strengthened and purified. The talent which was lent to perpetuate a lust of the flesh shall toil in the service of our Divine Lord. The head which I have set you to fashion must be life size. It is not the task of a week, nor a month, but, perhaps, a year. Work every day, work patiently, and bring to your toil both prayer and abstinence. Let your fare be water and the coarsest bread. Even lentils you must put aside. For a time I must hold from you the blessed privilege of going to God's Acre to meditate.

The bones of your departed brethren must not be polluted by your presence until you are, in a measure, purified from your great transgression. This, then, is the penance I will lay upon you. Have you anything to say?"

"I will do it, Father Abbot, with such feeble skill as I possess."

"It is well, my son. Go now, and toil in the abbey gardens till vespers. Peace be unto you!"

Brother Angelo turned to do as he was bidden, and the Abbot sank upon his knees in prayer.

Among the silent band which peopled that gray old pile lying placidly amid the green hills, much wonder was felt in regard to the nature of the sin of their young brother. But the vow of silence held back inquisitive tongues, and each member of the brotherhood must needs draw his own conclusions. Certain it was that Brother Angelo was changed, and wonderfully subdued. He glided through the dim cloisters like a spirit, with his head always bent low. Soon he came to lead the monk's choir, and his supplications were marked with a peculiar, piercing sweetness of tone, especially when the De Profundis was chanted. Then the young monk's voice rang in an agony of beseeching up the Gothic walls of the chapel; it seemed that a soul from the depths of perdition was calling in heartbroken tones upon the mercy of Omnipotence. Rising from his straw cot at two in the morning and praying till daybreak; then a meagre diet of bread and water; then to his penance — to carve from that great block of cedar the head and face of his Lord and Savior, bringing to his work only his two hands and a knife. Week by week the flesh shrank from his bones; his eyes blazed like lights set in hollow caverns. But there was no shrinking, no shirking, no giving away to physical weakness. And as the wood under his hand began to assume the proportions of a human face, and to wear the meek and loving expression of the Deity, Brother Angelo was seized with a holy fire of enthusiasm, and worked the harder and more determinedly, his trembling limbs scarcely supporting his frail body, and the perspiration rolling from his worn and sunken face.

So the winter and spring passed, and the summer came again. One day the Superior called the wood-carver into his presence.

"My son, I begin to think I was a little severe," he said, noting the wornout frame and the haggard face.

"'T is a glorious task, Father Abbot!" was the fervent answer. "I could kiss your hand in gratitude."

"How fare you in your toil, Brother Angelo? It has been almost a year since you began."

"It is nearly done. In two weeks more you may see it."

"It is well. You have been a faithful servant, and are ready once more to tread holy ground. And yet at night, while your brethren sleep, I would have you visit God's Acre. Not until your penance is complete can I grant you all the privileges of the order."

"You are kind, Father Abbot. I am overjoyed at your goodness."

"You may begin tonight, my son. Now go."

At nine o'clock, when the cowled brotherhood sought their cheerless and hard resting-places, a ghost-like figure stole from the rear of the monastery and made its way around a corner of the building to a walled plot which marked the last home of the monks. A number of small, black iron crosses dotted the ground, with well-beaten paths winding among them. Along these paths glided Brother Angelo, his hood thrown back from his head, his rosary between his fingers. The sweet-smelling breezes of a summer night blew about his face, but he was insensible to their gentle allurements, being lost in an ecstatic rapture of prayer. After an hour's pacing back and forth he went in as he had come out, leaving the tall white spire of the church a lonely sentinel in the moonlight.

The two weeks which Brother Angelo had reserved in which to finish his work were almost gone. Only one more day remained. On the evening before that day a party of pleasure-seekers had come to visit the abbey. This was very common, and guests were always entertained and treated with the utmost courtesy. In a mixed crowd, such as usually came, the women were never allowed beyond the porter's lodge. Yet all were privileged to witness vespers, from a loft connecting with the church of the laity, and overlooking the inner chapel of the monks. To this loft the party repaired at the proper time, under the guidance of a lay brother

who had been detailed to wait upon them. Silence being enjoined, they knelt and viewed the scene before them. It was a spacious chamber, lit only by the candles burning upon the altar at its farther end. The praying stalls were upon either side, with an aisle in the center. The windows were of stained glass, and were extremely tall; the roof was dimly outlined far overhead. Presently there came the subdued shuffling of many feet, and the brotherhood filed in, both the choir fathers and the lay brothers. Services began promptly, and the Latin recitative rolled sonorously through the room.

In the loft above knelt a woman with a pretty, piquant face, eyes and lips that laughed because they could not help it, and a mouth without character or decision. A woman who could not love steadfastly; a woman who could cause a man much pain. Her friends near her were not watching her, else they would have seen a startled look spread over her face. Her small, gloved hands clutched the railing before her, and she leaned forward with spasmodic breath. Beneath her the chant of praise swelled up and on. But out of the deep-chested chorus one voice had caught her ear — a voice of inexpressible pathos and longing; tenor tones of exquisite sweetness. When vespers was over her companions noted her unnatural pallor as they prepared to descend the steep, spiral stairway, and inquired in low voices if she was ill.

The July night was radiant under the glory of a moon approaching its full. In the little cemetery devoted to the abbey's dead the swift feet of Brother Angelo threaded among the smooth-topped graves. Tomorrow would place the crown of victory upon the ceaseless endeavor of a year. With supreme faith and untiring courage and matchless skill, he had wrought out a work of art that would live for ages. The essence of his body, the vitality of his being, had gone to make this achievement an enduring triumph. It was practically finished. A line or two added to the gentle brows; a perfected prong to one of the thorns in the crown, and Brother Angelo's carving would stand as a constant wonder to all beholders. Back and forth through the silvery night his feet led him, his soul aflame with the consciousness of a great success; his spirit keyed to communion with heavenly things.

Pitiless application and unremitting effort had worn the strand of his life to the point of snapping, but in his religious joy he did not know it. Trembling on the brink of the eternal, the beads at his girdle slipped through his nervous hands, as he prayed and thought of the day to come.

Suddenly the still night rang with a sound ill-attuned to the holy silence of the place. A woman's laughter, rippling in a *diminuendo* cadence of merriment, bubbled through the moonlight like a cascade of silver. The monk stopped short and recoiled, the words of devotion cut short on his lips. Then memory surged up and gripped his brain with a hand of steel, and a flitting panorama of days long gone passed before his eyes. Music, flowers, a room luxuriously appointed, and the white throat of one whom he loved. With a gasping sob, and driven ruthlessly by a power he neither understood, nor attempted to resist, he moved to a point where the wall straggled away into open ground, and, placing one burning hand upon the crumbling stones, he gazed down the slight slope which swept away to the hollow below. A party of sight-seers were picnicking on the grassy sward. He could see the shadowy forms now, and catch the low hum of different voices. A peculiar swish which battered down the sealed doors of recollection roused him, and he arose to confront a female figure almost within arm's reach. The moon shone full in her face.

"Mother of God!" he moaned, and staggered back, with his hands across his eyes.

"Arthur, for the love of heaven, listen to me a moment!"

She came closer to him in her earnestness, and her hands were stretched towards him.

Brother Angelo turned to fly, but a white hand grasped the rough fabric of his cassock's sleeve, and detained him.

"You must hear me! It is only a minute I ask — one minute from all eternity!"

He leaned against the wall, weak and trembling, his face twitching and his deep-set eyes wide and staring.

"Chance brought me here today, Arthur. In the loft at vespers I heard and knew your voice among all the other voices which were singing. Did you think I could forget it, when we have sung

together? We picnicked down yonder to pass the time until the hour for the train. I felt that I must see you, must speak to you, but I knew that it was hopeless. I slipped away from the others, and came up here on the forlorn chance that I might find you alone." The words crowded from her lips, and bore the ring of truth. "I could not bear for you to live and die and not know that I loved you truly and faithfully. You wronged me by your suspicions, and after you went away, I became desperate. But, Arthur, by the cross on yonder spire, and by these dead bones about us, my love for you was pure! Look at me! And should I love you yet, could you withstand the old passion?"

She tore her hat from her head, and her loosened hair fell billowing about her face and shoulders. It was the very face of the medallion.

Brother Angelo's wild eyes wandered from feature to feature of the countenance he had thought banished forever. His breath rasped harshly in his throat, and in a fearful frenzy of despair he threw his arms about her, crushed her to him, and kissed her fiercely again, and again, and again! Then, releasing her with a shuddering groan of shame, he sped towards the gloomy shadow which the monastery cast, and disappeared.

Next morning they found Brother Angelo dead upon the floor before the work which he had given his life to create, and in the sad eyes of the carven face was a look of pity and compassion.

Handwriting in the Air.*

BY LIEUT. F. V. S. CHAMBERLAIN.

NDER the law just passed by Congress, the 31st United States Infantry was being organized at the Presidio of San Francisco, in the old camp so familiar to the thousands of young Americans who have been to "the Islands" to help subdue the "Little Brown Brother."

My company had nearly reached its complement of one hundred and fifty men, being but two short of that number, when the order came for us to sail in ten days on the transport *America*. We, the officers, were assembled in the Adjutant's tent discussing the order when that gentleman remarked, "Carson, two men enlisted this morning, and as you are shy, I sent them to your outfit. Guess the First Sergeant has 'em now. Two brothers, and look to me like Hindus, but swore they were Americans, and I had to take them on. Gave the names of Thomas and William Jones."

I strolled over to my tent, where the old First Sergeant, veteran of Cuba, Porto Rico, and numerous Indian campaigns, met me with the two recruits.

"Get them their clothes, Sergeant, and let Sergeant Murphy drill them at once, so they will be in some kind of shape before we leave," I ordered, and forgot all about my strange-appearing recruits until we had been a week at sea, when the Sergeant, when he handed me the morning report, said:

"Captain, them two Jones brothers ain't Americans. They're some kind of heathen, but they're all right. Seems they've been at the World's Fair in Chicago and been peddling rugs ever since. Got broke, I guess, and then took on."

That evening, when inspecting the men's quarters for the night, I found my company gathered on the mess deck intently watching some one in the center of the throng. Suspecting the forbid-

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den poker game I crowded in and found Corporal McGuire, a fine type of old soldier, devoutly crossing himself while examining in his other hand a silver dollar, which, when Thomas Jones closed his fingers for him, was found, on opening the hand again, to be a copper cent. McGuire dropped the cent, broke from the crowd muttering "Howly Mother! They're crooked somehow, all right, all right."

Nothing could induce McGuire to re-enter the crowd, and the next day, with the old soldier's privilege, he approached me.

"Captain, them two recruits is crooked somehow, sir. Why! that Tom Jones can write in the air and his brother answer him from the other end of the ship. Seen 'em do it mesilf, sir."

Presuming the Jones brothers to be joking with the old man, I ordered the First Sergeant to stop it for the sake of peace and discipline in the company.

Three months later my company and Lieut. Sanborn's were stationed at Daitie, a large town on the lonely east coast of Luzon, operating against the forces of Lieut. Colonel Segovia, of Aguinaldo's army, who made his headquarters in the village of Paracale, some thirty miles up the coast, strongly intrenched behind an unfordable river. The old Major in command, energetic and anxious to make a name for himself and his new regiment, kept small parties out constantly to clean up the lawless bands of insurrectos in the intermediate country before moving on the stronghold at Paracale. One Saturday morning, Lieut. Hargood with forty men of my company, including Thomas Jones, went out to capture an outpost of the enemy, reported by the scouts on the far bank of the river in front of the village of Labauo, about eighteen miles from Daitie.

Hargood should have returned by Sunday night, and when the detachment was still out Monday evening, Major Coole came over to my quarters to talk over the matter. Hardly had the Major seated himself on my veranda when the First Sergeant and McGuire appeared in the dusk. Saluting, the Sergeant reported:

"Captain, that William Jones is a-lying on his bunk writin' in the air with his fingers. Says that outfit with Lieut. Hargood is surrounded in the church at Labauo and must have help. Says his brother is a writin' to him, sir."

"Yes, sir," broke in McGuire, "same as they did on the transport as I was a tellin' the Captain, sir!"

The Major grunted out something about "fool soldiers' talk," but made no objection to my order to have Jones brought to my house at once. On arrival he confirmed what the Sergeant had said, declared his brother and the detachment to be in danger, but evaded all questions touching on his brother's ability to transmit thought through the eighteen miles of space intervening between them.

"Well," said the Major, "I don't believe a word of it, Carson, but they've been out too long, and you had better take your company, what's left of it, leave Sanborn here with me, and go up there right away. Take the Doctor, plenty of ammunition and three days' rations on the pack ponies. If you bump into any of that Segovia outfit, shoot 'em up and find Hargood, sure."

I gave the necessary orders to the Sergeant, much to Jones' apparent relief, and entered the house to change my white uniform for the blue shirt, leggins, and field hat used on a "hike." When I reached the quarters twenty minutes later I found the company ready. Most of the men had made arrangements to go out before the order came, and the dozen little pack ponies were ready with their loads, a soldier at the head of each. The Doctor and two men of the Hospital Corps were there, each with his field pouch of medicines and dressings, and in five minutes we started. Every soldier had one hundred rounds of Krag cartridges in his belt, while from the breast pockets of the blue shirts could be seen two boxes of twenty cartridges each, taken along, as the Quartermaster-Sergeant expressed it, "In case of a tie, sir."

Bayonets were left behind, as they made too much noise swinging in the scabbards, and were of little use among the Tagalos, who seldom fought at close quarters as did the Moros or Visayans of Mindanao and Samar.

I noticed a feeling of uneasiness among the men just before we started, and was told that Jones had had another message from his brother that Lieut. Hargood was wounded and three men killed. I confess I was nervous myself, but walked up and down the long column of twos, the only practical formation on the narrow trail, to try to quiet the men. It was of no use. They were

apprehensive and nervous after the weird and uncanny events of the hour before, and McGuire's declaration that the Jones brothers "was wrong somehow," was having its effect.

A few miles out, one of the three men in advance on the point fired at a shadow through nervousness, increasing the intense mental strain we labored under. When we halted at the end of the first hour I noticed few of the men sat down to rest, most of them remaining in little groups earnestly whispering. Suddenly some one called me, and I found William Jones, surrounded by a little group, flat on his back, writing with his forefinger in the air. By this time my skepticism had disappeared, and I know I felt as much fear of Jones and his wonderful powers as any one in the company.

"What do you know, Jones? answer me," I commanded.

"Two more dead and two hit, sir," he replied.

We started forward, and so throughout the night the uncanny news came to us, sometimes at the halt, and sometimes while marching. At daylight we had reached the river, four hundred yards beyond which the Labaoo church, a gloomy pile of stone, appeared through the early light. Leaving the Doctor with twenty men and the pack train behind a hill to the rear, I formed a line of skirmishers, the men stripped to rifle, belt and canteen, preparatory to fording the river. Not a shot had we heard, which increased our feeling of awe. Had we come on a wild goose chase, misled by the foolish antics of a possibly crazy man? Or, on the other hand, were our men all dead in the church, their bodies mutilated as only a Filipino can dishonor the dead? I almost prayed for something to happen to relieve the tension. Just as we reached the middle of the shallow river it came.

A volley from many loud-mouthed Remingtons on the opposite bank and a man near me yelled:

"Struck something, by God."

I turned to see a man fall into the water, and hear a squad leader call, "Bill Jones gone. Got it in the head."

As usual, the Filipino volley was high, and after a return fire from us, standing to our waists in the water, a line of small men in blue cotton shirts and trousers broke from the bamboo at the water's edge and scampered over the hill, a few of them dropping

from our fire. We pushed on with a yell such as none but American soldiers can give, only to be stopped at the top of the bank by a volley from a line of hemp bales, improvised into a barricade, across the end of the street at the head of which the side of the church faced. A few rounds and that line broke and ran, pursued by two of our sections, while with the other two I double-timed to surround the church, fearing a trap. On the belfry, however, appeared the rotund face of Patsy Rourke, a tough kid bugler:

"Got any sow belly? We heerd them Krag volleys. I knowed dat Dago'ed do somethin' wit' his writin' in the air; seen him do it on the ship."

"Shut up," sternly replied the First Sergeant, "how do you get in?"

There was no need for reply. The church door opened, disclosing a barricade of floor tiles behind it, and eighteen drawn-faced men, each with three cartridges in his hand, who dropped over and asleep on the floor as soon as we entered.

In the rear, back of the altar, I found the wounded lieutenant and twelve of his men, Thomas Jones, who had been shot through the lungs, among them, feebly writing with his hand in the air. Just as I reached him he whispered:

"Bill is dead. I can't hear him, but I knew he would come as he said," and then, with a few words in some tongue, strange to me, a bloody cough and a sigh, he joined his brother in that mystic unknown, which they, strange waifs of fortune, seemed to know better than any of us, their comrades in arms.

The Edge of Life.*

BY WINONA WILCOX PAYNE.

"I SEEM already dead," he said. "Detached from earth, and disembodied. Let the dead speak to you."

She made no gesture of assent, but gazed into the open fire before them with unseeing eyes.

"When I am gone there must be no remorse that you have countenanced a suicide. And no apologies, no explanations. I need no vindication, for the deed itself is an assertion that my character triumphs over my disease."

She made no answer; to speak was to lose all self-control, to cry out against the inexorable law of nature which had brought them to this strait.

"Presently, with but a movement of my finger, this conscious Thing which I am changes into an unconscious Something. That which is I becomes It. Comrade, do you forget that promise to stand by me to the end?"

She only shook her head. She could not look at him.

"Forgive me that I ever asked it of you," he implored. "Forgive me that I ever entered into your life and spoiled it."

"Hush, dear," she whispered. "Between us two who have lived these happy years together, there can be no question of forgiving."

He caught his breath sharply and rose to his feet as if to ease a physical pain by change of position. His eyes wandered over their treasured belongings — the rugs, the books and pictures — and lingered on the prints upon the walls, a Rembrandt, a Botticelli and the Mona Lisa with her all-comprehending, incomprehensible smile.

"Old girl," he said, addressing the photograph with a sudden

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change of mood and an affected lightness characteristic of him, "you find this situation dramatic?"

The eyes of the woman narrowed, for his levity wounded her as it had done many times before in crises to her entirely serious. Yet it was like him that even as he faced eternity he should shroud the pain of their parting in a joke. Possibly it was an idiosyncrasy of his malady which her penetrating love had not before discovered.

"A year ago," he continued, facing her suddenly, "I might have made a good thing out of this scene. I might have written one more play — for the managers to refuse."

She smiled bravely, trying to meet his mood. And glancing at her, he caught a strange, faint replica of the smile upon the lips within the frame.

"You on that side of the table," he went on, "dear, beautiful you, with your black hair bound tight above your brow like a classic Fate; and I on this side, a — a — sort of wounded Gladiator. Between us a heap of worthless manuscript and — this — portentous — thing."

He took a pistol from its case and ran his forefinger delicately along its shining barrel.

"And an atmosphere charged with potential horror. You know there is everything in atmosphere," he added. "Listen. Can you not hear the thunder booming afar off? Presently we shall have the lightning and the storm. Kind Nature completes the situation according to the accepted canons of dramatic art." A cynical expression disturbed the weary lines about his mouth.

"You were spared one labor, then." She spoke with an effort, not lifting her eyes from the flames.

"One more failure, you mean. They are all failures, these plays; but that last one surely deserves success; it may be accepted yet."

He took the cartridges from the pistol and counted them. "One will serve," he said to himself rather than to her; and with the words he dropped one into place and laid the pistol down.

"Now that we have come to the last hour," he spoke decisively, "let us make no pretense about it — let us own quite frankly, you and I, that my whole life has been a failure. And we expected

so much, didn't we? We planned such beautiful, bright successes. Not riches nor fame — we never had any vulgar standards — but worthy work which should make both us and the world better."

He swept up the pile of papers, not impatiently, but as if completing a predestined action, and laid it reverently on the coals as on a funeral pyre. The woman turned away from the hot blaze and covered her face with her hands. Thought and feeling were dead within her.

"That is the real tragedy," he went on, "a man's life-work lying in ashes before his eyes. That the man himself should die by his own hand is nothing."

He watched the blaze flame up and flicker until the last white scrap had blackened. Then he turned to a seat on the couch beside her.

"But the queer thing about it is that the failures don't seem to matter much now, at the end of all things. You don't care about them now, do you?" He pleaded for a negative reply.

"No," she said, slowly. "Once. Not now. But you must not say that your life has been all failure. I cannot bear it. There has been Love."

He felt the forced smoothness of her voice, and repeated her last words slowly.

"There has been Love. But Love of which I have not been worthy. So there, too, I have failed."

She pulled his face close against her own and ran her fingers through his clinging curls.

"Your love has wrapped me round from the beginning," he persisted. "I have taken it as my right. Men accept love so. And I have given back to you, not such love as you deserve — dear heart, no man could give you that — but such love as man may give to woman. Even to me its selfishness is quite plain now. I have lived on your love, lived by it, and without it I should fail in the one thing left for me to do."

His voice was low, almost monotonous, but great beads of perspiration stood on his forehead. She only shook her head and kissed the hands she clung to and wiped the damp brow. Then silently they watched the burned-out paper crumple to ashes and sift down on the tiled hearth.

He drew a hand across his eyes wearily as if it shut from sight the soft gray velvet heap.

"Already madness seems a thing desirable," he said. "A high mental altitude which shall separate me from the effort, the failure, the commonplaceness of the world. Were I to live, I should no longer choose to ward it off, but should lapse into it almost of my own volition."

He had the pistol in his hands again, fingering over its shining mechanism. A cold draft seemed to strike the woman, for she shivered and stirred the fire mechanically until the embers flared anew, and pale, faint ghosts of manuscript floated upward.

"Were I to live" — he dwelt on the phrase — "I should one day slip out of lucidity forever, even as I formulate a thought or pronounce a word. And leave you in utter hopelessness of any living peace."

Shivering still, she took the pistol from him and laid it on the table. She knew that while he spoke his disease was rising up and engulfing him; that he was drifting away from himself, from her.

She threw her arms about him in an embrace of maternal tenderness. So it should not be. His self-inflicted death, were he insane, became a vulgar tragedy. By the force of her love she would compel him to maintain his mental clearness.

"Look into my eyes, dear heart," she said, "this last of many times we have talked so, hand in hand."

She hesitated. Her weary brain refused to respond to the tenseness of her emotion. Then she lapsed feebly into the Persian's quatrain:—

> "Why, if the soul can fling the dust aside
> And naked on the air of heaven ride,"

She stumbled through the words.

> "Were't not a shame"

Her voice failed utterly. He picked up the line eagerly:

> "Were't not a shame for him
> In this clay carcass crippled to abide?"

He stooped and kissed her on the forehead, saying softly:

"Brave heart, facing an awful situation with such steady, quiet courage. Once we said that joy brought us the supreme

moment of our lives. We were happy then. Now we see that this hour of parting is the sublimest moment we have ever known. For grief and death are the crown of living." He stroked her soft hair fondly. "Our play has proved a tragedy. Ring down the curtain. *C'est fini.*"

"In that future where you go alone remember that I love you, love you," she whispered passionately.

Then she rose before him, strong and beautiful, and turned to go.

It flashed upon him that she symbolized that unattainable life of which he had dreamed, that ideal life wherein he had failed; that she personified the simple, daily joys of that existence he was about to thrust aside.

"Oh, Beloved, that there were other ways than this," he cried out. "I have the easy part. You face the tragedy alone. Come with me, dear." He snatched a second cartridge from the table.

She smiled, raising her eyes to his and holding her hands out to him. But in an instant the smile died out and left her lips pale and drawn.

"And stain your memory with murder? No, love. We are caught in a maelstrom. There has been but one way from the beginning. There can be no other end."

He would have had her in his arms once more, but she shuddered away from him and held up a deterring hand.

"One touch, one kiss," she moaned, "and my strength will go from me. If we ignore the duty of this hour, our days will drift on and on until suddenly we face the horror of a separation worse than death. *C'est fini,*" she whispered hoarsely.

She had not meant to look on him again, but at the door she paused and turned involuntarily.

He had dropped back upon the couch; his face was toward her smiling, illumined; his eyes were fixed on hers.

Darkness enveloped her as she closed the door and shut him away from her forever. She made her way down the stairs, stumbling clumsily. She felt that she herself, not he, was about to die.

. . . . . .

Exhausted, she dropped into a huge leather chair by the win-

dow (they had called it his chair and his corner), and leaned her head against the cushion where his head had so often lain.

She was desperately conscious that she ought to cry, to scream, to faint or to fly out of the house and away from an impending horror.

The mantel clock struck three. She counted it mechanically. One part of her mind still dwelt on her tragic situation, while simultaneously another part perceived green fields and a beech wood, the softness of a May breeze and the smell of freshly-plowed earth; and heard him counting slowly, "One — two — three — Fire!" He was teaching her to shoot.

Now he was to fire. Now it was his turn to shoot straight. "One — two — three ——" She shuddered to find herself thus repeating the numbers, thus consciously awaiting the report. Was she, then, both judge and executioner?

The house was still as a stopped clock. They had arranged to be alone in their little world today. She, who pitied the neurotic and despised the hysterical, found the dead silence of the place intolerable. It sapped her self-restraint. It keyed her into an unfamiliar nervous tension. She longed piteously for all of the vague, comfortable, work-a-day noises of the establishment.

By a painful effort she wrenched her mind from the subject, but it only reverted helplessly to counting again. Was he not going to fire? Or had insanity come so soon and stifled his desire to kill himself or strangled his will to do it?

The thought led her back to the day they had made the compact which they now fulfilled. Years since it was, but it did not seem more remote than this past hour of their farewell.

As he had said, her love had wrapped him round from the beginning. She had bound up his cut finger when he was a boy. She had shared his schoolday triumphs and griefs. When he had come from college with his degree, they had found but one way to arrange their future. And life was beautiful as only youth can paint it.

Their wedding day drew near, when he came to her one morning, white and determined.

"They have brought my sister back," he said, "dead by her own hand, as our mother died before her. I am the last one of

my family. And the curse is on me, too. Some day I must take the road they have traveled before me."

She could not gainsay the miserable truth. She only put her arms about him.

"Our marriage would be utter selfishness on my part, ultimate unhappiness on yours. And the taint in the blood must not be transmitted."

Then she answered courageously:

"Who knows you as I do? Who will watch over you when the curse falls? We will marry that I may guard you. Do not think it a sacrifice. What other uses has my life? But your name shall end with you."

"Hark," he said. "When my hour strikes I shall know it. I shall not wait for death to come. I will not die by my own hand because I am insane, but by my own hand because I will not be insane. The paths to peace are short. Do not think I would try to escape mere physical suffering. But to be crazy"—she held up her hand to ward off the ugly word—"yes, demented, insane, crazy," he insisted brutally, "to be helpless until I have taxed the most patient friendship and loving kindness out of existence, until I am a menace to the woman I love best, until I have become a rag of humanity, a mere shred of mind bound to matter; that I have looked on twice already, that I will not be myself. It is not decent for one so damned to cling to a few last miserable hours of living. Why count it a great sin for such a one to end his life?"

His words swept over her and thrilled her like heroic utterances. He was big and gloriously strong and very lovable. Insanity was far away. She felt quite safe there in his arms.

"I will be with you when the end comes," she said simply. "If it must be your way you will tell me, and we will be brave together."

"Surely," she thought, lying there in his chair listening for the fatal shot, "no betrothal vows ever were so sealed before." She had kept her promise well. Never from the beginning had it seemed horrible to her. She had no regrets.

It hurt her to remember how fair their life had been. She shrank from all the happiness they had lived through together.

Only the sad things, and the work wherein they had failed were now endurable.

Their childlessness no longer seemed a grief. Nature, she knew, had meant her for a mother. But since no babe might share the wealth of her affection, she had lavished all her baffled maternal love on her husband. And when she saw the curse approaching stealthily — no eyes but hers could see — she had heaped up her love and concentrated it, as though by its mere quantity she could save him from his doom.

At first she saw an indecision in his work; then an irritability in his speech quite foreign to the wonted sweetness of his nature.

Soon he became forgetful of his simplest duties and abstracted so that he could hardly be induced to follow the accustomed daily round. Still she stood between him and all knowledge of his fate, seeking vain ways to ward it off.

And two years since he saw at last what was befalling him. Once more she set her love between him and his fear, concealing her solicitude with painful care, and persuading him that there was no immediate cause for dread. Since she herself seemed not afraid, he roused from his despondency and took up a life irresponsible and eccentric to her private knowledge, normal enough to the gaze of the world.

Then, to give some purpose to his motiveless days, she prompted him to write a new play. He kept her close beside him as the inspiration of his genius, and wrote what was to be his great play — the story of one who, merely fearing madness, imagined all its symptoms and drifted into it. Quite recently the work had been placed in the hands of a great promoter of theatrical enterprises. They dared to hope for its success; yet neither of them dared wait longer for the verdict.

Day by day as he wrote, she watched his disease creep close about him by slow, circuitous ways. When he was irritable she alone could soothe him. When his days dragged heavily and purposeless she alone could set him to his task. Since he was forgetful she managed their funds and spent them lavishly, too lavishly, for his comfort, taking him to travel in strange places where no one knew him or the curse that bound him. No one should ever know, if she could guard him.

And when, at last, she could no longer hide the dreaded truth, they had come home.

"I shall at least sleep better there," he said. "And the time for settling my account is not far off."

She knew that he was right. His was a fine physical mechanism, which the years would take long to wear out. Unless he chose his hour of passing soon, it would never come at his command. She shrank from an approaching day when he would not know her; perhaps would call her by a stranger's name. The bond of their betrothal must be kept.

Hand in hand they planned the end, just as they had worked up the plots of his plays. The dramatic instinct in them both responded to the situation and rendered it endurable.

Thus she went over the story of their common life from the beginning, skipping all its brightness and crowding it with sad details.

And all the time she listened, listened, as though a pistol shot were scarcely to be heard unless the senses were concentrated in expectancy. Her ears sang from the exertion. How still it was! There was not the slightest sound from the room above. She was no longer able to distinguish any sound, neither the ticking of the clock within the house nor the buzzing of the trolley car without.

A sudden fear chilled her. Perhaps she had been smitten stone deaf. Where, in history or in fiction, had she read of such a case? Perhaps he had fired the pistol and, though she had not consciously heard, the shock of it had taken from her the power to hear ever again.

At the thought she started from her chair and ran toward the stairway. But on the first platform she stopped suddenly, white and shaking.

What awaited her up there?

Death? She was not afraid of death.

But blood! His blood!

She sank heavily on the steps, her arms outstretched above her head, her fingers digging convulsively in the soft carpet while her imagination painted hateful pictures of a still figure in the room above — sometimes with blood flowing from its heart; sometimes

with blood flowing from its temple and marring all its manly beauty; but either way there was always so much blood.

A thin red line might now be creeping under the door and down the steps. What was that drip, drip, dripping?

She sprang to her feet, and listened in an agony of terror. Her hearing had grown acute to one sound only. Drip, drip, drip.

She would have screamed, but all her life she had cultivated self-control. It was impossible for her to obtain relief in that way now.

What if something red were suddenly to spot the ceiling above her? And drip down? She dared not even look up, but began to pace quickly back and forth from end to end of the apartments.

Coming close to the vestibule door she paused and opened it gently. Why not steal out of the house, away from the terror of blood, very quietly, lest It should hear? But with the impulse she closed the door, recalling her promise to be loyal to the end.

The splendid coil of her hair tumbled about her shoulders. She unbuttoned her collar with numb fingers and pulled back her gown from her throat. Even then she sometimes gasped like a spent runner.

"That way madness lies."

The familiar phrase brought a peculiar relief, a lightness of spirit, a sense of irresponsibility. There was no reason why she should live on alone; no child to miss her care. Even now, even so soon, the intangible spirit of him "wandering through desolate, wind-swept space" might need the intangible spirit of her. Why, then, he should not go alone. She would go up and get the pistol. Not vainly had he taught her how to use it.

But the blood! His blood! She could never get into that room alone.

Not because he was dead. If he were only dead she could go up and close the eyes and fold the still hands and be glad that the restless spirit had taken its release. But there was so much blood up there.

Consciousness was failing her. The world seemed far away beneath her feet. She realized that she must make an effort to get hold of that distant world again. There would be much for her to do there presently, something that no one else could do.

Thoughts flitted drowsily through her brain. Life, and Love, and Death, were all part of that sinking world. She must grasp them, too. Love she had surely known, long ago, in some other existence, perhaps. And Life too, she had known, for it had somehow depended on Love. And Death? Yes; Death was in a room above her, a room whose door she dared not open because ——

A great white flash penetrated to the depths of her understanding. A roll of thunder shook the house and the rain burst furiously against the pane.

She gloried in great storms. This one fitted to her feeling and eased her weary soul, restoring some measure of her accustomed self-possession.

The leaking eave still dripped dismally, but she no longer heard it.

Another sound was claiming her attention, the faint tinkle of a distant bell. She made out at last that it was the street door bell sounding with insistent harshness, and she groped her way to answer it.

A rain-soaked messenger handed her a telegram.

"Great play," she read. "Must see you at once."

Success an hour too late! How it harmonized with the fatality of his whole career! She winced under the exquisite hurt of it.

So it was possible for a slip of yellow paper to make her poor, wrecked life more bitter. She stifled a first impulse of self-pity. She felt that she was acting a part; as if the great calm which now possessed her were not an attribute of her own nature, but belonged to another character which she was temporarily assuming. She longed to plunge into an abandonment of emotion, a passion of tears. Such must be her true expression, not this dull, unfeeling quiet.

She sank into the great chair and stared straight in front of her. The muscles of her jaws ached, and she looked into an atmosphere full of mist. Her cold hands dropped weakly at each side, letting the yellow sheet fall to the floor.

There was no longer any need of effort; never again a reason to laugh or to cry. Life was stripped of its petty problems, and all the days that were left her lay quite simple and plain before her. It would be an easy matter to get to her grave now.

When he had fired the shot she could not tell. But she knew that he was dead. The house was close with the sense of tragedy.

The family cat jumped into her lap, purring ingratiatingly. She stroked it and buried her face in its silky coat. Tears came to her eyes. But not for him. He was safe now from a hideous tomorrow.

. . . . . .

The sound of wheels stopping at the door brought her to her feet. She knew their sound from all other wheels that went through the street — so many times had she listened for their coming when the house was full of an unnamable fear.

She had forgotten that it was the doctor's day to call — his usual hour. She moved toward the door feebly, like one walking after a long illness. Now she must face the revelation of that quiet room.

The doctor's trained eye noted, without betraying it, her dishevelled hair and collarless gown, and the trace of intense emotion which her pale face betrayed.

"Come up, come up at once," she said imperatively.

She went up rapidly ahead of him and opened wide the bedroom door.

The face was turned toward her as when she left the room. The smile on the lips had stiffened into a grin, and the eyes were not good to see.

But the pistol lay on the table where she herself had placed it.

"His heart, my child," said the old man gently. "I should have warned you that this might come. Great emotion or sudden ——"

But she heard no more, for she lay at his feet in an unconscious heap.

The Lady in the Green Veil.*

BY DON MARK LEMON.

HE—Señor Ignacio Gironés!—could he hear a woman sobbing upon the streets at night, and not offer his service? No! Never! He lifted his hat and approached the veiled, sobbing figure, and in his native Spanish asked if he could serve the "señorita." It would give him exquisite pleasure! He sued! He entreated! He implored!

At the sound of his voice the lady turned about, trembled violently, then fell upon her knees, and sobbed in English: "O, sir, I am alone! I am in distress! If you will help me, the angels in heaven shall some day reward you!"

As the lady spoke, she lifted her veil and disclosed a face so wonderfully beautiful that Señor Gironés thought that if his suppliant herself should reward him she would fulfil her own prophecy.

"Señorita, arise!" The young Mexican extended his hand and gently aided the lady to her feet. "I, too, speak the English language. I will help you! Do not weep, I implore."

The sobbing ceased, and again the angel-like face looked out for a moment at Gironés. Then the veil fell and the wearer spoke through its green folds.

"O, sir, I can see that you are a gentleman, and will not wrong the trust I place in you. There are assassins seeking to murder me!" The man blanched, and his hand leapt to his breast, where his pistol was concealed. "In heaven's name, save me!"

Again the lady was about to fall at the feet of Gironés, when he put forth his hand and forbade her.

"Nay, señorita, you are too beautiful!"

There came the sound of hurried footfalls, and around a near

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corner of the street loomed two dark figures, at the sight of which the lady in the green veil gave a quick sob and shrunk back. Señor Gironés saw that he must act, and act quickly. For himself, he was armed and could battle with the assassins; but a chance bullet or a needle-like dagger might pierce the heart of the lovely creature beside him.

"Quick, señorita!" he cried. "I will hide you here until the morning. I am an official and have the keys of the building. Fear not: I will protect you! I, Señor Ignacio Gironés!"

The lady thrust one delicate, ungloved hand into the hand of the young Mexican, who trembled like a lover at the touch, and Gironés hurried her into the corridor before him, and, drawing forth a key from his pocket, unlocked and opened a heavy iron-bound door, through whose sheltering portals the pair hurriedly passed. They had not a moment to spare, for they could hear footfalls close behind them, and in another instant the assassins tried the door, only to find it locked from the inside and the quarry safe from pursuit.

"O, sir, you have saved my life," whispered the lady in the green veil. "How can I ever repay you?"

"Señorita," cried the gallant Gironés, "I will go outside and kill your enemies."

The lady seized her protector's hand. "No, no!" she pleaded. "Do not risk your life for me. I am unworthy!"

Señor Gironés lifted the delicate hand of his companion to his lips and kissed it.

The lady in the green veil looked about. She stood in a great stone room, lighted from overhead by a broad, glazed transom. The room was bare, save for two large glass cylindrical contrivances resembling somewhat Buddhistic praying-wheels, back of which ran a long, flat desk. At the rear a door led off somewhere.

"Señorita, you are awearied."

"I have not slept for two long, miserable nights," sighed the lady. "I could sleep here upon the bare floor."

"Never!" cried the gallant Gironés. "There is a compartment through yon door, where I will spread my cloak upon the sofa, and you shall rest excellently well. Come, I will show you."

He led the way to the room in the rear, which was furnished

like the directors' room of a bank. Against the wall, to the left, stood a leathern sofa or lounge. Removing his cloak, the young Mexican spread it upon this lounge.

The lady gave a happy, contented little sigh, which alone repaid Gironés a thousand times for his labor; then she glanced down at her hand, where shone a beautiful broad band ring, set with a large ruby-like stone. Slipping the ring from her finger, she held it out to her gallant protector.

"Take this," she said. "It is an amulet ring, and will bring you good luck."

Señor Gironés took the ring, and was about to slip it upon the little finger of his left hand when the lady uttered a sharp cry.

"No, no! it will bring you ill luck upon that hand! You must wear it upon your right hand. So!"

The recipient slipped the ring upon the little finger of his right hand, which it fitted perfectly, and bowed.

"I shall wear it, señorita — always!"

"May heaven bless you, sir, for your goodness to me to-night; and to-morrow I will tell you my history, and perhaps you can help me to find my long-lost father. *A Dios!*"

Señor Gironés retired to the great bare room with its two curious cylinders, and left the lady to her much-needed rest.

He waited the next morning until ten o'clock, then knocked at the door leading to the inner room. Receiving no answer, he again knocked. Still no answer. Thrice again he knocked — in vain! Growing alarmed, he made bold to open the door and look within. A lady's hat and green veil, all crushed, lay upon the floor near the leathern sofa. The lady herself was gone!

In the City of Mexico, Republic of Mexico, there is located the headquarters of one of the widest known institutions in the western world. It is not a bank, yet it issues paper scrip, copies of which, at some time or another, can be met with in every city, town and hamlet of both Americas; scrip that can be found tucked away in the sweaty blouses of day laborers, or resting in the bejeweled pocketbooks of the very rich.

The value of this scrip varies from nothing to sixty thousand

dollars per copy. Ninety-five per cent of it is valueless, yet no one can say at the beginning of a month what particular piece of this scrip will, at the end of the same month, be worth nothing, or six times ten thousand dollars.

It is by many considered as great a disgrace to have copies of this scrip upon one's person as to have counterfeit money. In the United States the law forbids its possession, — and the lawyers and authorities traffic in it regularly! The preachers preach against it, — and their parishioners buy it! Here and there a preacher has a piece of this prohibited scrip hid away in an inner pocket!

This scrip is nothing more nor less than the tickets of the great Mexican Lottery, the colossal success of which company lies in the fact that it offers much for little. For four dollars one may win sixty thousand dollars, a greater sum than the average workman can earn in two lifetimes. Again, it offers nothing for something. For four dollars expended one may get nothing in return.

The stock in trade of this lottery company is honesty, absolute honesty. There must be no trickery in its monthly drawings; all must be fair and open. This honesty, and publicity, is obtained as follows: Within the office of the company are two revolving glass cylindrical contrivances, resembling, somewhat, Buddhistic praying-wheels, one being considerably larger than the other. Within the larger cylinder are eighty thousand small rubber tubes, each like an inch piece of macaroni, and within each of these rubber tubes is a little paper slip bearing a printed number. These numbers are all different and run from 1 to 80,000, corresponding with the eighty thousand monthly tickets issued by the lottery company. Within the other and lesser cylinder are some twelve hundred of these small rubber tubes, each containing a little paper slip bearing a printed sum in dollars. These sums are not all different, but vary from sixteen to sixty thousand dollars, corresponding with all the prizes of the lottery save what are termed the "approximate" and "terminal" prizes.

When the time for the monthly drawing arrives, these cylinders are revolved lustily, so that their contents are thoroughly shaken up, as a hat containing raffle slips is shaken up, — this to prevent fraud, like the shuffling of playing cards, — and at the larger cylinder stands one gentleman, and at the lesser cylinder stands another

gentleman. At a word from the proper official, the first gentleman, with bared arm, thrusts his hand into an opening in the larger cylinder and draws forth one only of the eighty thousand little rubber tubes contained in the cylinder. This tube is immediately handed to the official judges, and the paper slip contained within it is drawn forth, and the number printed thereon read aloud, and set down by a clerk. Immediately, the second gentleman, with bared arm, thrusts *his* hand into an opening in the *lesser* cylinder and draws forth one only of the twelve-hundred-odd little rubber tubes contained in the cylinder. This tube is handed to the judges, the paper slip within drawn forth, and the sum in dollars printed thereon is read aloud, and set down by a clerk.

The slip contained in the tube that was drawn by the first drawer bears, let us say, the number 456. The slip contained in the tube which was drawn by the second drawer bears, let us say, the figures $8000 printed thereon. Thus, ticket number 456 of the Mexican Lottery wins a prize of eight thousand dollars, and somewhere, perhaps tucked in the wallet of a sailor on a ship far off the coast of Chile, is ticket number 456. This fortunate fellow will sail the seas no more. He cashes his ticket through some bank — and perhaps a week later is found robbed and murdered.

Again, the first gentleman draws forth one of these little rubber tubes, and the second gentleman does the same. The first has drawn a tube containing a slip bearing the number 754; the second a tube containing a slip bearing the printed sum $16. Ticket number 754 has won sixteen dollars. Somewhere, say in a hamlet in Uruguay or Michigan, a spinster has, hid away in her tea-urn, ticket number 754 of the Mexican Lottery. It is a whole ticket and she paid four dollars for it, and three times she has dreamt that number 754 drew the capital prize of sixty thousand dollars. When the lottery drawings for the month are published and she learns that she has won but sixteen dollars, she sits down and has a good long cry, then goes back to her weary, underpaid drudgery.

Her dreams are all shattered; yet she is fortunate to have won the sixteen dollars for, after the gentleman at the larger cylinder has drawn some twelve hundred of the eighty thousand little

rubber tubes contained in that larger cylinder, and the gentleman at the lesser cylinder has drawn all the twelve-hundred-odd tubes contained in that cylinder, there yet remains in the larger cylinder over seventy-eight thousand tubes, and all the lottery tickets with numbers corresponding to the numbers printed on the slips contained in these undrawn tubes have drawn blanks, except those which have won a small "approximate" or "terminal" prize.

Once every month this drawing is repeated. Once every month some one wins the capital prize, two or three a good, round sum, many a sum that makes them ravenous for more, and tens of thousands, nothing!

Such, practically, is the working of the great Mexican Lottery, on whose drawings many smaller lotteries and raffles innumerable are based.

The afternoon following the disappearance of the lady in the green veil from the inner office of the Mexican Lottery Company, Señor Gironés, who was one of the two official drawers of tickets of the company, together with Señor Baranda, the other official drawer, and the judges and clerks of the lottery company, assembled at the lottery building, the doors thereof were thrown open to the public, and the regular monthly drawing was held.

Señor Gironés was greatly troubled. What had become of that lovely creature whom but the night before he had so gallantly and courageously protected? On entering the inner office he had found that the lock of the door which led therefrom into a narrow stone passage in the rear had been forced. Had the lady herself, for some inexplicable reason, secretly quit the building, or — dreadful thought — had the lock been forced by the two assassins, the room entered, and the lady borne away against her will to her doom?

Señor Gironés was glancing down at the handsome broad ring given him by the mysterious lady in the green veil, which token the gallant young Mexican proposed never to remove from his hand, when the judges commanded that the drawing begin. Thrusting his right hand into the larger of the two glass cylinders, Gironés was about to make his first choice when he felt one in particular of the innumerable little rubber tubes clinging to the inner part

of his hand, and closing his thumb upon the clinging cylinder he drew it forth.

In the early stages of his experience as official drawer, Gironés would not have accepted the first tube that came to hand, but had felt around a bit, appreciating the importance to some one somewhere in the world of his every drawing. But custom had long made him wholly indifferent to any choice, and he now handed the tube which he had so carelessly drawn to the judges, who stood ready to receive it. Before doing so, however, he was compelled to pluck the little rubber forcibly from his palm, where it clung as tenaciously as if glued there. He was somewhat surprised at this.

The slip of paper contained in the tube was immediately drawn out by the judges, and the number printed thereon read aloud to the whole assemblage. The number was 5555.

Señor Baranda, the other official drawer, who had charge of the lesser cylinder, now thrust *his* right hand into *his* cylinder, and, feeling a particular tube clinging to *his* palm, closed his fingers upon the little rubber and drew it forth. He, too, in his early experience as official drawer, would have chosen more particularly. But custom had blunted his nicety, and so, like his companion, he took the first tube that came to hand.

The little rubber clung tenaciously to his palm, but he plucked it away with his other hand and handed it to the judges, and the paper slip within was drawn forth, and its contents read aloud. The slip bore the printed sum, $30,000. Ticket number 5555 of the great Mexican Lottery had won the thirty thousand dollar prize.

Rarely before had so great a prize been drawn at the very first drawing, and now a wave of excitement swept over the assemblage. Did any one present hold ticket number 5555? No; it seemed not. Though a woman had fainted in the rear, a poor hatless, shoeless creature, she did not hold number 5555. Her ticket was numbered 5556!

Again young Gironés thrust his right hand into his cylinder, and this time one of the little rubber tubes fairly leapt up and glued itself to his palm. Furtively, he attempted to shake off the clinging rubber that he might choose another; but the thing held

fast, and, wonderingly, he drew it forth and handed it to the judges. In doing so he had to tear this second tube also from his palm, so firmly it clung there. Surely he must have some pitch upon his hand. He wiped his hand upon his sleeve.

The slip of paper within this second tube was drawn forth and the number printed thereon read aloud. The number proved to be 77777.

Again every one in the assemblage scanned the numbers of their ticket or tickets. But, no; 77777 was not in the possession of any one present, it seemed. Still the ticket might draw but a few dollars, forty or sixty pesos, perhaps.

With his second drawing Señor Baranda experienced again the same remarkable experience of a tube clinging to his palm. . . . The slip within this tube was drawn forth, and its contents read aloud. Number 77777 of the Mexican Lottery had drawn a prize of eight thousand dollars.

The assemblage caught its breath. Not in five years had two such large prizes been drawn successively at the beginning of the drawings.

Now, for the third time, young Gironés thrust his right hand into his cylinder, and again that phenomenon of a tube clinging to his palm; and again he sought to shake off the rubber and choose another. But the little tube clung tenaciously, and not daring to delay longer lest the assemblage might think that he was feeling about for a notched or "doctored" tube, he drew forth the little rubber cylinder that clung to his palm, furtively tore it from its hold, and handed it to the judge. The slip contained therein bore the number 99.

Now, for the third time, Señor Baranda, also, experienced the phenomenon of a particular tube clinging to his palm, and he, too, not daring to hesitate lest the suspicion of fraud be awakened, drew forth the offending tube, furtively tore it from its hold, and handed it to the judges. The slip within the tube was drawn out and its contents read aloud. The judges themselves started in amazement. Ticket number 99 of the Mexican Lottery had drawn the capital prize of sixty thousand dollars, gold!

"A miracle!" shouted the assemblage — and almost a miracle it seemed. Yet the occasion actually had its precedent. Once

before — but only once in the history of the lottery — the three chief prizes had been drawn successively at the beginning of the drawings. Some one in the crowd recalled the event, and any suspicion of fraud was silenced by the citation of a precedent.

The interrupted drawings were resumed, but not again did a tube cling to the palm of either Señor Gironés or Señor Baranda, and the afternoon's work was concluded without any other incident worthy of mention.

After the drawings were over, young Gironés noticed lying upon the floor one of the little rubber tubes that he or Baranda had drawn, and he picked it up and began abstractedly to twist it between his fingers. He was thinking of the lady in the green veil. Should he ever see her again? Suddenly he was all alert. The little tube in his hand — like a live thing — was trying to leap down into his palm.

He let go of the slender cylinder and instantly it leapt into his palm, or, rather, directly across his little finger where that member joined his palm.

A few moments later an expression of sadness came over the youthful and handsome features of Señor Ignacio Gironés. "Alas!" he sighed, "that one so lovely should be so base! Alas! that an angel from heaven should stoop to cheat a lottery!"

For, on the little finger of the young Mexican's right hand was the ring that the lady in the green veil had given him, in token of her admiration for his chivalry, and the tube was clinging, not to the gallant fellow's little finger, but to the ring which circled his little finger. It clung there as a needle to a magnet.

The significance of his late midnight adventure, and the phenomenon of the lottery drawings, now lay before young Gironés as plain to his comprehension as Don Quixote in the original. The lady in the green veil had previously purchased tickets numbered respectively 5555, 77777, and 99, and then, through collusion with some clerk in the lottery, had got inserted the printed slips bearing those particular numbers, and the printed slips bearing the three chief prizes, in tubes similar in appearance to those used by the Mexican Company, but composed of a quite different composition. Afterwards — alas, the thought! — this beautiful creature in the green veil had presented each of the two

official drawers of the lottery with a ring which, when brought into close proximity with the eighty-one-thousand-odd tubes in the two glass cylinders had drawn forth the six prepared tubes the first of all, precisely as a very powerful magnet would attract six needles from amidst a pile of wooden chips.

Young Gironés now sorrowfully recalled that he had seen a ring, the mate in power though not in appearance to his own, upon the right hand of his friend and fellow-official Señor Baranda, and the next day he chided Señor Baranda for accepting a ring from an American lady when, at the time, he was engaged to a Mexican lady.

Señor Baranda started guiltily. "How have you learned of my adventure?" he demanded.

"I can read your mind," said young Gironés.

"But the ring, you have one also."

"Hush!" advised Gironés.

"Then it was these rings that drew the grand prizes!" cried Baranda. "Ah! she was a trickster! No assassins pursued her! I shall inform the company!"

"Tut!" said the other, "the tickets were cashed this morning. Ninety-eight thousand dollars, gold!"

"The lady in the green veil, where is she?" demanded Baranda.

"If I knew that!" sighed young Señor Ignacio Gironés. "Ah, my friend, if I knew that!"

A Man, a Woman, and a Baby.*

BY C. F. MARTIN.

HE was very small, very plump, and very pretty; he was possessed of a somewhat philosophical turn of mind. He spent most of his time lying in a soft bed in a bright, sunny nursery, and he was regularly given his dinner in a nicely warmed bottle.

The person who was most familiar to his wondering eyes was a dainty, white-clad, white-capped girl, who was always cheerful and happy. It made the baby happy to look at her; he expressed his pleasure by crowing in a language which he and the nurse seemed perfectly to understand.

He was dimly aware that outside the narrow limits of his nursery there existed a big, noisy, confusing world. He had received vague impressions concerning it during the brief hours which he usually passed outside on sunny afternoons. On these occasions, however, the fresh air always put him to sleep so promptly that he had had but little opportunity to examine the strange things surrounding him.

Remotely connected with his inner life there appeared to be other personalities than that of his nurse, although he had never been able satisfactorily to analyze their relationship.

On rare occasions a man had made brief visits to the nursery. He generally looked gravely at the baby for a short time, asked a few calm questions of the white-capped nurse, and went out.

The baby always felt much in awe of the man; he never crowed when the man was present.

More frequently the baby had a visitor who in some respects resembled his nurse, except that she was much more beautiful and more dazzlingly attired. She often bent long over the bed, and looked earnestly at the baby. Her face, despite its beauty, never

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seemed happy like that of the nurse, and she never talked in the language which the baby and the nurse understood.

The baby's face always grew solemn with wonder and expectation when the woman stood over him. Somewhere in his being he felt a prompting to crow to her; he somehow felt that it might bring a smile to her sad eyes — but he had never quite dared.

One day as the nurse was preparing his dinner the woman entered. She was very pale, and her beautiful eyes were shadowy.

"You may go out for an hour, Lizzie," she said, "I will give the baby his bottle today."

The nurse's eyes opened wide with astonishment, but she made no comment as she complied.

After the nurse had gone the woman knelt by the little white bed, and mystified the baby beyond measure by bursting into tears. For a time she sobbed uncontrollably, while the baby forgot his bottle in his wonder.

When she grew calmer she poured out her heart to the baby. He seemed to understand, and she had no other confidant. She told him many things of neglect, misunderstandings, and heartbreaks. Finally she ceased talking, and sat motionless, her dark eyes gazing absently out of the window.

The door opened softly, and the woman started to her feet; when she saw the man a quick flush sprang to her cheeks.

"I beg your pardon," he said, instinctively lowering his eyes, "I did not mean to intrude — I did not know you were in."

"I — I have been giving the baby his bottle," she stammered, conscious of her tear-stained face. "Don't let me drive you away," she continued, as he half-turned toward the door. "Did you come to see the baby? I didn't know you ——"

"Ever came to see him?" he supplemented as she hesitated. "Yes, I come in now and then to see how he is getting along; Lizzie is rather young to have the care of a baby."

"Don't you think he is a little pale today?" she asked.

The man studied the baby gravely for a moment. "It seems to me he does look a bit under the weather," he said judicially. "I wonder if he gets enough to eat."

The baby, emboldened by the contents of his bottle and somewhat reassured by the attention he was receiving, gave a little

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The baby, emboldened by the contents of his bottle and somewhat reassured by the attention he was receiving, gave a little

gurgle, followed by the best crow he was capable of producing. Then he smiled cordially at the two grave faces above him, confident that they would understand that he was ready to accept overtures for his favor.

The woman's eyes lighted up; she looked at the man. He met her gaze for a moment, and glanced away.

"Queer how thoroughly his eyes are like yours," he said, with an effort at common-placeness.

"And his mouth and nose are replicas of yours." She stooped impulsively and kissed the baby's tiny mouth. Looking up, she caught the man's eyes, and something she saw there brought the rosy flush back to her cheek.

"It's been a long time," he said slowly, "since——."

"Yes, a long time," she murmured, as if phrases did not have to be completed to be understood.

"Ever since——" he began, and stopped again.

"Since that night in the conservatory," she mused, "when you saw Cousin Tom——"

"What do you mean?" he interrupted quickly. "Do you mean it wasn't Dick Challoner that kissed you!"

"He has never done such a thing in his life!" she exclaimed.

"Oh, Mary," he cried, with a rush of understanding, "Why didn't you tell me it was Tom?"

"Because you never asked me," she replied, "you chose to put your own construction on things, and to treat me coldly, and to act horrid with——"

But her speech was never finished, and the baby squealed with delight at seeing such demonstrations from this enigmatical man.

When the nurse came in a few moments later she found that the man and the woman had learned the language of the baby so well that all three were holding an animated conversation, and the subject of it all seemed to be the baby.

"Lizzie," said the woman, whose eyes were shining, "hereafter, I will give the baby his bottle every day at this hour."

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